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BULLETIN

OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

January, 1951

Volume 22, No. 2

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MEETINGS AND EVENTS FOR 1950-1951

NORTHERN SECTION

BOOK MEETINGS:

Chairman: Mary Lins
 Dates: January 13, 1951
 April 14, 1951

SPRING MEETING

Date: May 12, 1951
 Place: San Jose, California
 Program: To be announced later

SOUTHERN SECTION

BOOK BREAKFASTS:

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 Place: Manning's Coffee Shop, 319 West Fifth
 St., Los Angeles
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Dates:

January 6, 1951
 February 3, 1951
 April 7, 1951

SPRING MEETING

Place: To be announced
 Date: May 3, 1951
 Program: To be announced

INSTITUTE SESSION

Place: Compton Junior College Library
 Date: January 22, 1951
 Time: 7:45 - 8:45 P.M.
 Topic: "School Librarian and Social Studies
 Teacher-A Team"

Speaker: J. Paul Leonard, President, San
 Francisco State College

STATE MEETING

Time: March 17-18, 1951

Place: Santa Barbara

Speaker: Dr. May Hill Arbuthnot, Author of
 "Children and Books"

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FOLLOW EL CAMINO REAL TO SANTA BARBARA!

MARGARET JACKSON

Librarian
Santa Monica High School

When Spring Vacation rolls around next March don't hesitate to throw a few things in a bag and take to the open road. Choose the route laid out by the soldier Portola and followed by the priest Serra . . . and come to the spot that Richard Henry Dana fell in love with so that he wrote on his second visit . . . "There lies Santa Barbara on its plain, with its ampitheater of high hills and distant mountains. Little is altered, the same repose in the golden sunlight and glorious climate, sheltered by its hills . . . the same dreamy town and gleaming white mission."

It is not so dreamy, perhaps, in this fantastic twentieth century but it still shows the influence of the days of the Spanish dons in its architecture and its devotion to the leisure arts. Whatever may be your special interest Santa Barbara will smilingly, hospitably have much to offer you.

Considered by many the most beautiful of all the missions—Santa Barbara, with its red-tiled corridors and twin-domed belfries, stands on the high ground west of the city, facing the sea and surrounded by secluded gardens. In the garden grows a weeping willow, supposedly from a cutting from the grave of Lafayette. Another interesting landmark is the De la Guerra adobe now occupied by colorful studios and shops of the art colony that give visitors the feeling of Old Spain. The Museum of Natural History is housed in the stucco Spanish-type buildings situated in a grove of live-oaks and contains a permanent collection of the flora and fauna of the region. Two other examples of Spanish architecture are the Court House and the Public Library which houses a large collection of Californiana, and offers an unusual reading-room in the court yard.

A drive to the east of the city will bring you to the landscaped estates and beautiful gardens of Montecito. If you are driving down from the north, take the San Marcos pass where Fremont once made his camp. That will bring you to the beautiful Mission Santa Ynez and Mattei's Tavern in Los Olivos. Perhaps you will want to spend the night at this famous stagecoach station, first opened on the Royal Highway in 1888 and still hospitably receiving guests. Tucked away in this fertile valley is a complete surprise . . . the neatly scrubbed and bustling Solvang settled by a colony of Danes in 1910.

There are surprises and beauty at every turn along El Camino Real. Hasta la vista!

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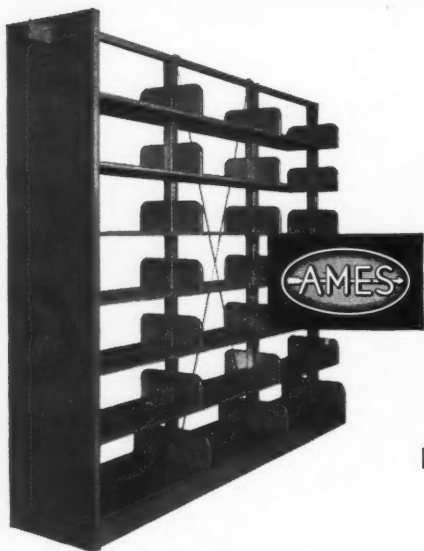
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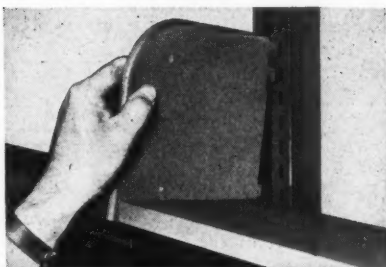
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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

MARY E. FLECK

Reading becomes an increasingly desirable achievement, in fact, an almost hallowed achievement, as its position becomes more and more threatened by dubious arts with greater glamour. I recall something of my own childhood which seems very quaint to me now, when various aunt-like relatives, full-bosomed and energetic, used to despair to my Mother that her little daughters seemed to care for nothing except "to bury their noses in a book."

Since children have learned to care for other things like "running to the movies", or "pouring over comic books", or "listening to gruesome murder mysteries", or "gluing themselves to the television", how wonderful the era of "noses buried in books" appears. The child has become a miniature Everyman in his pilgrimage through a world fantastically beset by the evil lure of the movies, the comics, the radio, and the television, while the librarian flits like a blithe spirit championing the right, as she promises to accompany little Everyman to the end of the road and ward off the wicked quartet that would prevent him from "burying his nose in a book".

But the librarian in the piece need not be doomed to such a role, for as she accompanies little Everyman she can show him how to use his enemies so strategically that they become his servants and his friends, and so they all go in one jolly company to the end of the road.

Unmetaphorically speaking, that is what librarians are doing when they employ radio, the movies, and the qualities latent in the comics as agents which have a potentiality of friendliness toward reading. We are discovering that potentiality in the movies and the radio, we are seeking some element of it in the comic books, and we are hoping that it will exist in television.

Television is still so fresh upon us

that we have had little chance to test its friendliness. It is going through a stage common to our inventions when the magnitude of the achievement transcends the uses to which it is put. Who shall quibble over what we see on the television screen when the marvel that we see anything is a feat of science beyond our understanding? Does the parent expect that the first vocal efforts of his child shall be words of wisdom? The marvel that the child *speaks* raises his first words to a relatively immortal plane. But that immortality suffers sudden death unless his later utterances transcend the first.

We are ready for television to do a bit of transcending, and librarians and educators generally will have to be the "transcendentalists" in the process. This idea is substantiated in the following quotation: "Not so certain are the prospects for developing television's great educational potential. Here in the United States, the swift use of television after World War II did not give us a chance to plan ahead for its educational development. Our educators are now faced with the difficult task of catching up with a medium that has already begun to set its patterns. On the other hand, in Canada, where there is as yet no television, educators, forewarned by its fascination for American children, have asked the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to develop educational programs for use on the first Canadian stations, scheduled to be opened in Toronto and Montreal in September, 1951".¹

If this amazing new television, together with the radio, the movies, and the comic books, cannot be made to work for us and for our libraries they will be against us. It behooves us to accentuate their positive!

¹ Riley, Frank and Peterson, James A. The Social Impact of Television. *Survey*, November, 1950.

BROADCASTING TEEN-AGE BOOK CHATS

IMA VENABLE

Librarian

Jefferson Junior High School, Long Beach

(Reprinted from Library Journal, November 15, 1950)

Do you have a tape recorder in your school system? Why not use it in relation to the pleasures of reading? Most people are fascinated by the sound of their own voices and young students may be led to expand this attraction into creative activity.

Our experiment with this interesting machine in the library of Jefferson Junior High School of Long Beach California, developed into a transcribed radio program which was broadcast as a series over the school's radio station, KLON-FM, "The Voice of the Long Beach Public Schools." Participating students named the series of broadcasts, *AROUND THE TABLE WITH BOOKS*.

The programs aspired to these objectives: (1) to guide accelerated readers to think creatively about books and to share their reading experiences in an interesting way; (2) to encourage wider reading and a more meditative response to it; (3) to give these adolescent boys and girls an opportunity to participate in radio work while learning more about the artistic use of this medium in relation to their studies.

Here's how it started. We were groping for a new method of reporting on books for English and social living classes. Our "It's fun to read" philosophy wilts perceptibly when exposed to some of our lengthy and tiresome book report requirements. Some teachers have eliminated the book report entirely at the junior high level. Others feel that a form which is brief and yet records the child's true reaction to the book is feasible. We worked out several book reviewing ideas in cooperation with teachers, among them the oral book round table. It often happens that several students in the same class read the same book, of course. For variety, why

not compare ideas orally rather than have each one hand in a separate report? Recording the discussion and then immediately playing the tape back, lures us into self-criticism and improvement.

For motivation play some of the tape recordings of successful round tables performed by students. Then a group of three or four selects an appealing book. This may in some way relate to a phase of their social studies. When all have finished reading it, they hold a little conference and elect a moderator. The moderator should be alert and capable of quick thinking, even more so than other members of the group, since he, or she, is expected to pilot the discussion and, at times, must be able to clear up some point or pick up a loose end. At this first meeting they make a few notes on topics for discussion. Teacher and librarian may be consulted. If the librarian has read the book, she can insure a fair interpretation of its content and essence, subtly directing the flow of conversation into the stream of human relationships and social values. Junior high school students are ready for this guidance and, lacking it, may drift into irrelevant channels. The teacher is invaluable for grammatical authority and surely may help in attaining expressiveness.

To facilitate the organization of the program and save time, a pattern such as the following is given each member.

BOOK REVIEWING A PATTERN FOR ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Plan the round table for five to seven minutes. Be sure you have thought the whole program through clearly to avoid long pauses. Pronounce your words distinctly, avoid repetition, and keep an eager, chatty tone. Moderator

takes the initiative and begins the program.

I—Announce the title and author of the book, giving a brief descriptive sentence. Example: "This a round table discussion of *Bells of Heaven*, the story of Joan of Arc, by Christopher Bick."

Introduce members of the group. Example: "James Brown, Mary Hart, and I, George Dawson, will tell you of our opinions of the book. We are 7th grade students at Jefferson Junior High School in Long Beach, California."

II—Now the audience should be made acquainted with certain facts about the book, such as whether it fiction or non-fiction, biography, travel, etc. Give the four "w's": *where, when, what, and who*, if they apply to your book. This should come from all members, each telling one "w", around the table with quick, snappy statements.

III—Let the group choose from the following suggestions the points for discussion. Your own ideas may be substitute! for any listed below. Keep the discussion jumping from one member of the group to another in order to avoid long, drawn-out speeches. Enough must be said on each topic, however, to make complete thought. Be sure the audience understands what you mean.

1. Author (if of interest to us).
2. Characters; why you liked or disliked them; what were some of their problems?
3. Exciting incidents.
4. Humor, wit.
5. Something sad or tragic, cruel or unjust.
6. Climax, or highest point of interest (don't reveal the outcome!)
7. Something beautiful or tender.
8. Something unforgettable.
9. How the author kept the reader in suspense.
10. Anything new or startling you learned.
11. Interesting places or unique customs.
12. Love: brotherly love, close friendships, family love, romantic love, etc.

13. Quotable words (short passages may be read).

14. Style of writing.

15. Physical makeup (if unusual).

16. Ending (keep ending secret but say whether satisfactory).

17. Who should read this book?

18. Questions from the class.

IV—Moderator's closing: "This concludes our discussion of the book, *Bells of Heaven* by Christopher Bick. We hope you enjoyed it. and that many of you will read this biography of Joan of Arc."

At the second conference the group should be ready to work the program out as a whole. They may have clues on cards which fit into the hand (sheets of paper are clumsy and noisy at the microphone) and serve to remind them who is to talk on certain points and who asks questions of whom, etc. For our programs there are no scripts or memorized speeches. Thus, the mood of pleasant, casual, conversation is preserved. This informality imposes a timing problem when actually broadcasting. This may be handled by planning supplementary questions to be explored should the discussion fall short of its allotted time. Such questions may be contributed from the class audience. Should it be necessary to cut the discussion short, the moderator must be alert to the logical spot for a closing. Signals must be worked out to keep the group informed of the time element just as on a regular radio program. Youngsters delight in signals and are often alert enough to ad lib, although, it should be remembered, they also fall easily into confusion.

The third meeting of the round table may be held in the library with the class for audience and the machine ready to record the discussion. Some teachers prefer having the whole class listen in, but it is possible to invite those who would like to listen to draw chairs around the reviewers while others check out books and read. If students prefer having one practice session with the recorder, they

(Continued on Page 22)

ON THE AIR

DOROTHY HAMILTON

Librarian

San Carlos Elementary Schools, San Carlos



"Hello Boys and Girls—here's your friend the Book Box Lady again". The above line opens a weekly radio program for children in Palo Alto and vicinity. It is a Saturday morning presentation of the Children's Theater on KIBE (1220).

The series of Book Box Lady shows began in June 1949 as a summer activity and has progressed through two summers, a school year, and is well started on a second school year. The scripts have been written to meet a double purpose; first, to bring more good books to the attention of radio listeners, and second, to accord an opportunity for children to participate in live broadcasting.

As a children's librarian, without benefit of radio training, where was the writer to start? Following the belief that a good librarian doesn't know all the answers, but she knows where to find them, the initial step was to decide just what parts of her own training and experience could best be put to use. Of course that meant knowledge of the wide field of children's literature and the best introduction of that material to boys and girls. It meant calling to mind hundreds of instances wherein youngsters had been attracted to books which the librarian had been bubbling over about. As those actual happenings were set down on paper, complete with the incidental chatter which inevitably

becomes a part of librarian and youngster becoming better acquainted, the Book Box Lady shows were begun.

Calling for help among friends with radio training and experience was both pleasant and easy. Hazel Robertson, Director of the Children's Theater, was able to give many helpful suggestions. Regine Bertling, well accustomed to script writing, and Roy Morgan, the "answer man" for the radio production problems at the Theater, added the benefit of their knowledge.

Opening the activity to children of assorted ages in a recreational setup was an ideal situation. We announced a class in "Listening Adventures". With the class we used some recordings that featured books or well known stories. Discussion followed which included choices of books to talk about on a program which the class might produce. Youngest members of the group, six and seven year olds, dictated their reviews of favorite stories and they were jotted down and incorporated in the scripts. Boys and girls from nine years up wrote their own. When all scripts were turned in, we gave some careful attention to the factors that involved us as program participants and factors that would involve our friends as program listeners.

An ideal, set up and adhered to consistently, has been spontaneous enjoyment of stories. In order to preserve this, rehearsal of scripts has been kept to a minimum. Reminders of what makes good listening come into discussion now and again, but with brevity and firmness rather than repetition.

Giving children a chance to read script in their own group, set up their own criticisms and thereby help each other to overcome their reading troubles,

has been the basis for final selection of talent for the shows. This policy has been carried out in school groups as well as theater groups.

Broadening the program during the school year has been fine experience for teachers and children alike. This has taken place in the San Carlos Elementary School District. Early in the school year we talked the matter over with Superintendent Ruth Melendy. Her enthusiasm was even greater than ours! Principals caught the spirit immediately, and teachers were *not* a poor third. What more could we ask?

By the time we had a few guide lines set down, it was nearing November, with Children's Book Week in the air. We wanted to put something on the air each week in November to honor the national celebration which limits itself to one week in that month. So our Book Box Lady programs were planned to give many children an opportunity to introduce favorite books. Each grade level from the fourth through eighth was invited to participate. Script writing was done by the children. Groups which served as critics were set up to offer help following a careful listening period. A wire recorder was used to record the actual live show and make it possible to use the program for classroom listening, PTA programs and other similar occasions.

Following the Book Week programs, still further expansion seemed possible. But our ideas had to be held in check while we took note of the requests of listeners. "Fan mail" had to be reckoned with, and served a purpose which was very timely, that of reassuring our youngsters that they were building up a listening audience and therefore the quality of their performance would need to be consistently good. Radio is real, not make-believe, when you are given an opportunity to actually broadcast. This is in direct contrast to the

(Continued on Page 19)

MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE COMICS!

MARGARET E. KALP

Assistant Professor of Library Science
School of Library Science, University of North Carolina

Have you been keeping up with Dagwood and Blondie lately? Do you know what Superman and Dick Tracy have been doing? What about Tarzan, Prince Valiant, and Brenda Starr? If you are an adult, and especially if you are a teacher or a librarian, many or all of these people may be unknown to you. These characters from the comics are no strangers to the young readers with whom you work. They know them all and many more.

There is probably no other topic in the English language which can produce such an immediate reaction on the part of teachers, parents and librarians as the comics. The reaction is usually immediate and violent; there seems to be no middle ground. The majority of adults react unfavorably when the comics are mentioned. Only if the children who read them are consulted is the support of the comics outstanding. It must be confessed that not all comics are good and desirable, in their characteristics and above all in their ideas and influence. At the same time, not all are equally bad and equally to be condemned. For one thing, a distinction should be made right at the start between the old familiar comic strips of the newspaper comic sheets, like *Mutt and Jeff*, *Gasoline Alley* and *Bringing Up Father*, and the more recent development, the comic magazines or comic books, like *True Crime Comics* and *Wonder Woman*. The newspaper comic strips are designed for family reading and for general appeal. The comic magazines are a different matter. In many of these instances, as one critic expressed it, the comics are not comic any longer.

However, there are many things which one can learn from the comics. What are these materials which appeal so strongly to our young readers

(and to some not so young?) Where does the secret of their attraction lie? All those who work with children and young people, who attempt to guide and direct or develop reading interests and abilities need a knowledge of the comics and their attributes to do a thorough job in the reading field. That means that instead of a horrified drawing back from the comics as a source of contamination, a touch-them-not attitude, we need to approach them with an inquiring mind, a sense of humor, and get to know something about them in the light of their possibilities for use to a good end in our particular situation.

Action and excitement, plenty of pictures, plenty of conversation are the things most often asked for by young readers in their books. These same items are frequently the predominant characteristics of the comics. Each scene or "frame" in the comics contains action and carries the story forward. The reader of the comics becomes accustomed to this continuous punch of action and expects all of his reading material to maintain something of the same pace. All of the story in the comics is apparent in the pictures with conversation added. No wonder the slow reader (or the lazy one) who has difficulty with a page full of printed material in a book seizes on the pictorial comic with its few words of text. Wouldn't you? The comics are contemporary, the language of the comics is colloquial and flexible, the characters speak as the people who surround the child speak or they speak in the true tradition of the cowboy or gangster or detective which they represent. One child said that he read crime comics because then when he and his gang played they were gangsters or detectives he knew how to talk in character.

Psychologists and reading experts tell

us that we read what is made easily available and accessible. What could be more accessible to the young reader than the comics, both from the point of view of location and of cost? They are sold everywhere and at a low price. Can you find books for young readers as readily available and for as small a cost? A comic book can belong to a child as most books can not. His library book must be given up and returned at the end of a set interval, whether he is ready to part with it or not. His books at home, if he has any, are the gifts of family and friends and must be treated with great care and preserved. No one cares if he folds up or rolls up his comic book and stuffs it in his pocket or inside his coat so that he can have it with him in case he wants it. No one cares if he uses his comic books as a medium of barter or exchange with his friends. His comic book is his, and something that really belongs to one is important to this age group.

An adult's answer to the reading of comic books by young readers is often a prohibition of these materials in the home, in the class room, in the school library. Such prohibition by itself is obviously not a solution. The comics will be read, particularly during a certain stage in the child's development, and the adult who forbids such reading is making it all the more alluring. There is no fruit so sweet as that which is forbidden! Comics are a part of our American scene. Characters and expressions, the happenings and activities of some comics are known to almost everyone. The child who is deprived of this knowledge or forbidden this information is definitely "out" in meeting with his fellows on an equal footing. Furthermore, bad as some of the comics may be in their format and in their ideas, many of them present ideals which appeal to young readers and ideals which adults attempt to promote with young people. Of course, the comics are anything but subtle in their presentation. Black is black and white is white, justice

always triumphs and evil always gets its just reward, but too subtle an approach for the young often defeats its purpose.

The comics, like radio, like the movies, and more recently, television, can be used to stimulate reading. More than any thing else, they constitute materials in which most readers are already interested. That interest is present and does not have to be created. Comics furnish a point of departure in stimulating reading. Reading experts tell us we must begin where the child is, in interest and in ability, both ability in the mechanics of reading and ability in comprehension of ideas so far as their range and complexity is concerned. Like anything else an excessive diet of the comics should be avoided and a happy medium should be sought. The happy medium should be in the comparison of the amount of reading of comics which is done with the reading of other materials. In his reading development, no individual should remain indefinitely on the level represented by the reading of comic books, but this level is a natural stage in the reading development of most children, and one through which most children will pass.

Parents, teachers and librarians protest that they can not build appreciation for good literature when children are allowed to read the comic books. No one could argue very strongly in support of the literary quality of the comics, but the fact remains that in promoting reading, the ability to read with enjoyment and understanding must come first. Development of literary appreciation is a refinement which must come after this basis has been established. The comics can not be an end in the reading process, but they certainly can be a means, and a very definite one with some readers.

Just as all radio programs and all movies are not equally to be recommended for young people, there is a distinction to be made between comics

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RADIO . . . BETTER THAN MERLIN

HELEN SEYBOLD

Librarian

Buffum and Lincoln Elementary Schools,
Long Beach

It's magic. It's King Arthur and radio together, and we had a wonderful time with them. Never, I am sure, had the children at the Bryant Elementary School been so interested in King Arthur.

I suppose one could say it all started six years ago when a special reading program for accelerated sixth grade readers was set up in the Long Beach Public Schools. This program was planned for those children in the sixth grade who have high I. Q.s and who were reading at least one year beyond their grade level. This group is composed of not more than twelve or fifteen persons who meet once a week with the librarian and once alone with their teacher. The purpose of the program is to introduce them to some of the finer pieces of literature for children. Special attention is given to fairy tales, Newbery Medal books, Caldecott Medal books, translations, epics, poetry and legends.

Legends are always among the most fascinating material presented, but sometimes the interest is short-lived because the children are not familiar with the old type phrasing and because they do not have the background of the times. In an attempt to eliminate the latter evil, our group made a study of medieval ways. First, we talked about the feudal system, the castles, the entertainment, and the food. (They were greatly intrigued by the peacocks which were roasted and then brought back to the table in their own feathers.) We followed this work with a brief history of medieval England. With their teacher they made detailed studies of castles and drew four floor plans of their own ideas of good castles. These, together with pictures they drew of a knight, serf, and lord, were exhibited on the bulletin board.

Now, we felt we were really ready to embark upon a study of King Arthur. We began by my telling them the story of *The Coming of Arthur*. They were then presented with a list of books to be read. These books were: *The Boys' King Arthur* by Sidney Lanier, *The Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* by Mary Macleod, *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights* by Howard Pyle, *The Story of Lancelot and His Companions* by Howard Pyle, *The Story of the Champions of the Round Table* by Howard Pyle, and *The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur* by Howard Pyle. The children read these books with the understanding that afterwards we would talk about them together. With their teacher's assistance they decided to pantomime the story of "Gareth and Lynette".

Interest in both the pantomime and the discussion was great. A child was appointed by the group to lead the discussion, and they voted to talk about such things as their favorite among the books listed, the best liked knight, and whether they would have liked to live in those time. We practiced the discussion about four times and the pantomime about eight times. Then came the moment when we presented our enterprise before the intermediate segment of our school. The program was so well received that we were asked to record the discussion for a radio program. The children highly approved this suggestion and promised to work faithfully.

Perhaps it would be wise to digress for a moment and say that the Long Beach Public Schools have operated their own F M radio station since October, 1949. Teachers and children are encouraged to record any interesting work they have done, and a special radio assistant comes out to the school

with a tape recorder to do the transcribing. This is done by appointment.

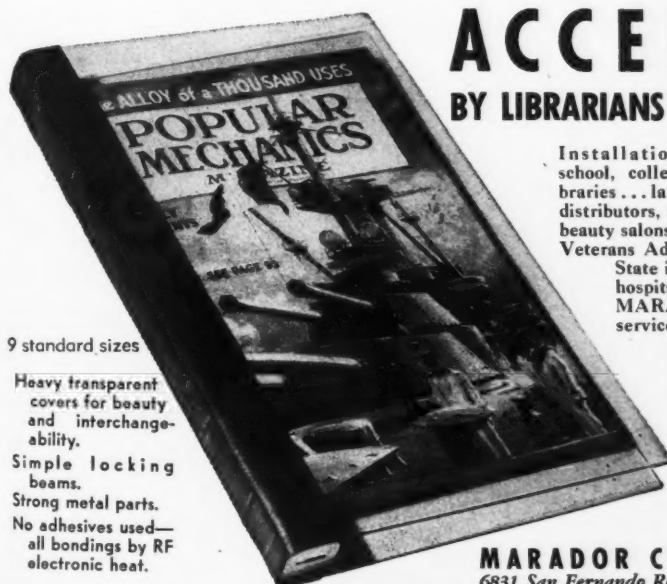
We made our appointment and then almost outworked the proverbial beavers. Both the teacher and I worked with the children on enunciation and continuity of speech. There was great difficulty with the word "library". To hear it pronounced by children one would almost think the library had been converted into a variety of fruit, for it is usually pronounced "liberry". The habit of clogging their utterances with "a's" was their greatest trial, but they finally virtually overcame this difficulty. They learned to think clearly and be original, for they could not repeat what another person had said. They used no notes, and that mean they *had* to think quickly.

Background music is almost a necessity for such a program, and we were

fortunate in having the cooperation of the vocal music instructor. She worked with the Glee Club and they prepared a song suitable for the King Arthur theme. This helped establish the mood for the program.

When the radio technician came out to transcribe the program, we had both the Glee Club and the discussion group assembled in the library. We seated the reading group about a table and the librarian passed the microphone to each one as they indicated that they wished to speak. They began by the leader's asking each child to identify himself. They then talked of the subjects we have previously noted. Our first try was not an outstanding success, for the children suffered a period of "mike fright", and they clipped their speeches so that they sounded as sheared

(Continued on Page 21)



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AROUND THE TABLE WITH BOOKS

MILDRED BAKKE

Librarian

Franklin Junior High School, Long Beach

It was the work Mrs. Ima Venable did at Jefferson Junior High School with her book panel discussion that gave us the idea for a similar series at Franklin. We borrowed some of her recordings and played them to one of the social living classes. After hearing the records, all the youngsters wanted to participate in a similar series of book talks.

We asked the teacher to select six youngsters to report to the library. They were told to read *Robinson Crusoe*. We felt the discussion should lead to some training in judging the novel, so we organized the discussion around four headings: character, setting, plot, and style.

We chose *Robinson Crusoe* for the first discussion because of its simplicity. There is only one important character, one main setting, and a plot with few complications.

A discussion leader was chosen by members of the group. He was given an outline with the four topics: character, setting, plot, and style, with a few sample questions under each. He was asked to make up questions of his own under each of the headings, and each panel member was told to contribute at least five questions.

We had many meetings in which we discussed *Robinson Crusoe* for a full hour. The youngsters argued with intensity about facets of his personality; they recalled innumerable details of the island on which he lived; they conjectured at great length on his problems of survival. We had difficulty at first in trimming the program to the fifteen minutes allotted.

We invited two classes to come into the library to watch the actual recording. They were an excellent, responsive audience. The fifteen minutes of recording is always a tense period because anything can happen.

Everything went smoothly until one of the panel members who had been nervously rocking on his heels, hitching up his pants, and going through all sorts of actions to relieve his tension, suddenly, preparatory to saying something important, thrust both his hands deep into his pocket with such energy that one of the strategic buttons on his pants went flying across the room. The panel members had a moment of almost hysterical panic, the audience suppressed their titters admirably, the boy involved nobly recovered his poise and his pants, and the recording continued. On the playback, however, it was discovered the sensitive microphone had picked up too many of the gasps and titters, so the record had to be made over.

The next novel we talked about was *Kidnapped*, more complicated in construction and more exciting in plot. The discussion took much less supervision because the youngsters, the same group which had worked on *Robinson Crusoe*, had evolved a pattern in the first novel.

They were not sure of how David would react to a present-day environment. They felt Robinson Crusoe, if he were alive in Long Beach today, would be a prosperous business man because he was shrewd in conquering his environments, but Alan was always at hand to help David out of his bad situations, so what he would do on his own they didn't know.

The third in the series was *Tom Sawyer*. The youngsters loved discussing that. Tempers were lost over whether or not Tom could be classed as a juvenile delinquent. As one girl put it, he went around in gangs, cut school, and stole. The side defending Tom said he was good at heart with a mischievous streak that led him into scrapes, but the scrapes were not serious enough to put

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ON THE AIR

(Continued from Page 11)

synthetic type of classroom production which is widely used and from which children need to learn the distinction. A familiar phrase in connection with producing Book Box Lady programs is "Radio is business, not monkey business."

Requests came for more story telling, which during the book chat programs, had been kept to a minimum. So the December programs were given over almost entirely to the telling of Christmas stories by the Book Box Lady. Then a few programs which featured folk tales and well known fairy tales seemed to accomplish two things, namely, answer requests from listeners and usher in a new experience for the children who wanted to take part in the shows. By midyear, there were scores of children who wanted to participate, and many requests for repeat appearances on the show.

The additional type script was to take the form of a quiz show, one in which there proved to be appropriate places for many children. Script writers, quizmasters, book teams, score keepers and studio audience came into the picture. This particular type of quiz show was "born" when the Book Box Lady had a few days "away from it all" in the Santa Cruz redwoods. Details of organization were worked out and plans laid for making it possible for about forty children to put on the show each Saturday morning during the spring months of last school year. Full cooperation of teachers and administrators added the final touch which provided a rich opportunity for more than 400 children in the San Carlos District.

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RUTH M. PITCHFORD

Vice-Principal
Wilson High School, Long Beach

"They" say that movies are killing the reading of books, because it's time-saving and more entertaining to "see it in the movies". We hear this often enough to make us wonder if it's true. If, like many Americans, we're prone to accept almost anything "they" say as fact, we're unlikely even to look at the statement critically. But—let's do so—and although the look may not plumb the depths we may discern a few items of mild interest or perhaps one or two provocatively disturbing.

In the first place, why does Hollywood clamor for movie rights to a goodly percentage of best-selling novels? Isn't it because the movie-makers anticipate that a large number of those who made the book a best-seller will want to see the movie? Obviously, there must be something to this, since Hollywood does not pursue policies which do not pay off at the box office.

By the same token, why is there usually a new edition of a novel which has been successfully screened? Isn't it because the book sellers anticipate that those who made the movie a box-office success will want to read the book? A first edition may be a financial failure, but the wary book publisher risks a later edition only when he is fairly well assured of sales. True, the "movie-edition" is usually a cheaper one, but the fact that it is illustrated with scenes from the movie is an indication that the publisher has been influenced by the success of the screen version.

In 1946 (a fairly typical year) Hollywood purchased sixty-five novels. It would be informative to trace the sales reports of these books after they were filmed just as they were traced before movie producers bought them, for "reading departments of all major studios report on and catalogue religiously practi-

cally everything that appears in print" ("SLR Goes to the Movies"—*Saturday Review of Literature*, October 7, 1950). However, it is a conservative assumption that book-publishers lost no money on any one of them after Hollywood brought them to the screen.

"They" say that numerous writers who go to Hollywood suffer untold anguish over the fate of their creations at the hands of the movie-makers. Locales are changed beyond recognition, characters are cast in roles never to be recognized by a reader of the story, and even titles are made over until nothing is left of the original except a screen-credit in small type. But, actually, very few best-sellers suffer such a fate, for screen-moguls are as anxious to capitalize on a Maugham or a Shellabarger as book-sellers are on a Powers or a Russell.

This article, having been written by an inveterate reader who is not an inveterate movie-goer (shall the twain ever meet?) there is a possibility of bias, of refusal to accept the inevitable. However, if we were to poll the readers who see movies taken from novels, and the movie-goers who read the books afterwards, it seems reasonable to assume that neither situation harms the other too much, and it is likely that the overlap of the two groups will be greater than "they" say it is. If this be wishful thinking, doubting Thomases are challenged to write a dissertation on the subject and submit their finding to this Bulletin but it would be more fun to see a movie—or read a book.

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In the Bulletin

RADIO . . . BETTER THAN MERLIN

(Continued from Page 15)

sheep must look—bare and uninteresting. We repeated the discussion, and this time their tongues worked as though they had poured oil on them. We had an animated discussion to which everyone contributed. Afterward they played the tape back to us, and the children were surprised at the sound of their own voices. Many times we heard the query, "Do I really sound like that?"

The children had done a fine job, but for the purpose of the Accelerated Reading Program it was decided that the librarian, not a child, should lead the discussion; therefore, we prepared to do it over again. We practiced a couple of times, and back they came to make another transcription. The Glee Club again supported our efforts, but again the first attempt was not successful. However, we persevered, and the second try produced the best program we had done. Despite the many times we had done this, the reaction of the children was never the same. They always injected something new and unexpected. For example: when one girl was asked if she would have like to live in the time of King Arthur, she retorted, "Yes, it would be fun to have so many knights fighting over me." One lad was a bit more cautious. "I would sooner read about it in a book."

What was the result of all this work? Did the children read more? To the last question I think the answer is a definite "Yes". The books are difficult, even for accelerated readers, but after starting the radio work, some of the children had read as many as three or four of them. Never before had we been able to inspire them to do this much work.

Not only did they show more interest in the King Arthur stories, but they also elicited a much greater appreciation of the work we did the remainder of the year. They had much greater poise and knowledge of books and authors was

OUR MILITARY WORLD

It happened during the war when high school seniors as potential soldiers were being oriented in military matters—broadly speaking. The library became a depository for pamphlets on venereal disease to which the students were referred. One day after school the librarian questioned an innocent looking, dewy-eyed youth who seemed to be searching rather vaguely for something he couldn't find.

The librarian: "What are you looking for? Can I help you?"

The dewy-eyed youth: "Oh yes, ma'am! I'm looking for the pamphlets about those military diseases."

FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY SUPPORTS LIBRARIES!

(As revealed in student resumé of motion picture on Patrick Henry)

Patrick Henry gave a speak about are contry going to had war, but to end Patrick Henry said, "give me *library* or death" and George Washington back Patrick Henry up.

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greatly expanded. When we first talked over the Robin Hood stories, their comments were extremely shrewd and intelligent. They had learned what to look for in a book. A mere discussion before their classmates might have accomplished some of these things, but the radio presented a much greater stimulus, and they felt they must indeed work hard in order to live up to their audience.

Yes, we had fun with radio. To us it was a wizard more powerful than Merlin. It was almost as though by magic we had entered the gates of King Arthur's castle.

BROADCASTING TEEN-AGE BOOK CHATS

(Continued from Page 9)

should be allowed to do so. If there are questions from the class, the moderator repeats them into the microphone and any or all members of the round table may contribute to the answer. Listeners and participants, alike, may comment on the merits and flaws of the discussion, after the recording is played back.

Having heard the recording, librarian and teacher decide whether it has further possibilities for radio use. Charm, originality, balance, completeness of thought, are among the elements necessary for a provocative program.

Teen-agers, if properly drawn out, often show a refreshing naivete of expression. Their artless views may prove quaint or witty. Students know beforehand that they are potential radio "stars". If their program is not chosen for radio broadcasting there are other compensations: credit for a book report and fun with the tape recorder.

We plan to keep our most interesting round table recordings. Labelled and classified, they will be useful for purposes of comparison over the student's three year period in our school. Teachers may borrow them for classroom use, too.

Having chosen a discussion for radio, we plan to consummate the final transcribing as soon as possible before interest lags. Teen-agers hop rapidly from one blithe undertaking to another, so we can't drag it out and expect them to manufacture buoyancy which they do not feel. A forceful student announcer is procured and given his opening and closing lines. He can contribute to the flexibility of timing, if given a choice of a long and short closing. Our programs are transcribed in the librarian's office, which is adequate in size and construction for this work, although by no means an ideal studio. Other schools in the system also contribute to the series of broadcasts. The series is scheduled by radio personnel and study guides sent out to all schools with printed schedules. Study guides for listening classes should not tax the program too heavily. We

hope to stimulate our listeners to read the books. Some of them may want to try a round table of their own. In addition to social living classes throughout the system who are invited to listen to the broadcasts, many parents listen in.

It is inspiring to see these young people grow as a result of this stimulating radio-book work. They are not mature critics at this age, of course, but they can make some rather penetrating observations. Confidence in their powers of expression and a deepening of their love of books are obvious results. The librarian learned a lot about adolescent reading taste through these contacts.

On "back to school" night, when parents visited our school, we played excerpts from each program in the library and featured in our exhibit-case photographs (informal poses at the microphone, taken and enlarged by a member of the group) of our thirty-six "Jefferson Radio Stars" along with the books they had discussed. More than sixty parents attended the thirty-minute program. We believe they felt a whole-hearted approval of the activity.

LIST OF BOOKS USED ON RADIO PROGRAM "AROUND THE TABLE WITH BOOKS"

Note: Books are grouped according to programs and in the order of their transcribing.

- I *Scarface*, by Andre Norton
Drinkers of the Wind, by Carl Raswan.
- II *Scotty Allen, King of the Dog Team Drivers*, by Shannon Garst.
Bush Holiday, by Stephen Fennimore.
- III *Silver Quest*, by Elizabeth Meigs.
I Heard of a River, by Elsie Singmaster.
- IV *High Trail*, by Vivian Breck.
Gridiron Challenge, by Jackson Scholz.
Purple Tide, by Leland Silliman.
- V *Mystery of the Eighth Horse*, by Martha Lee Poston.
North Wind Blows Free, by Elizabeth Howard.

MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE COMICS!

(Continued from Page 13)

as to their value and suitability. A recent and informative list which evaluates comics as "No objections", "Some objections", "Objectionable" is the one "555 Comic Magazines Rated" which appeared in *Parents' Magazine*, February 1950, and is available as a separate reprint from the magazine, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York 17, New York. The adult who works with young readers will be alert to the possibilities of such lists and will be on the watch for lists and articles which can be used in defining the problem of the comics and working out an attitude toward them which is based on a practical view of the situation and a recognition of some of the elements which make comics useful in the reading program. So often adult reaction to the comics has been largely emotional, perhaps hysterical. The comics may not indeed be very comic to most adults these days, but we are in part responsible because we take them so seriously. We "view with alarm" so loudly that we help to create a situation where, except for our calling attention to it so repeatedly, one might not exist. Or, at least, one of such proportions might not exist.

The important thing in utilizing comics in the reading program is to recognize the appeal which they have for young readers, analyze this appeal to see of what it is made, and then try to give children the same elements in better

artistic and literary form in books. It is not so far from a comic book to a picture book like Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hatches the Egg* and McElligot's *Pool*, Marie Hall Ets' *In the Forest* and Marjorie Flack's *Angus and the Ducks*, where the technique used again is that of telling the story through pictures and with little text. Beyond the true picture book, the short book with many illustrations, large print, small amount of text, mostly conversation, and an uncomplicated plot is the next step. James Daugherty's *Andy and the Lion*, George Schriber's *Bambino the Clown*, Dr. Seuss' *500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* and Munro Leaf's well-loved *Ferdinand* are examples which may be cited here. The comic spirit in humorous books will also help to give children those things which they now seek in the comics. Homer Price, Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill are characters who can furnish fun and excitement too. The ostrich approach to the comics, hiding our heads in the sand when confronted with them, is no answer. Know the comics yourself so that you can make them work for you. Recognize their elements of appeal so that you can use these same elements in promoting your stock in trade—reading. Don't raise a battle cry against the comics as an enemy. Meet them half way. Make friends with the comics, and they will be your friends. More important, the children who read them will be your friends. From that beginning, who knows what will grow?

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T.V. AND THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

MARJORY PEARSON

Librarian

South Gate High School, South Gate

Television turned the spotlight on the high school library when the "Know Your Schools" program of the Los Angeles City School System featured students of South Gate High School. The program was presented in the studio of KFI on December 27, 1949, and repeated in two radio broadcasts later in the week.

The first part of the television broadcast depicted the early days of education when no concept of the library in the school existed. Participating were Miss Jasmine Britton, director of the Library and Textbook Section; Mr. John N. Given, Public Relations Director for the Los Angeles City Schools, and Mr. William B. Brown, Assistant Superintendent in charge of the Personnel Division. Then the scene changed to the modern high school library of today. Featured were Miss Marjory Pearson,

librarian of South Gate Senior High School, and a group of students from the school. Mrs. Mildred Frary, librarian from the Library and Textbook Section, played the part of a parent seeking counsel about suitable books for her small daughter.

The main purpose of this program was to give parents and other interested spectators a sample of the activities in the high school library. The cameras showed the librarian doing all the busy detail work of book orders, filing and cataloging; they also revealed students coming to the librarian's desk in search of information and guidance about the use of books. Last, but not least, the conference between the librarian and a parent revealed another aspect of the librarian's work—that of making the resources of the library available to those in the community.

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AROUND THE TABLE WITH BOOKS

(Continued from Page 18)

him in the delinquent class. We finished *Tom Sawyer* about a week before school closed last year.

This fall we prepared panel discussions for Book Week on *Huckleberry Finn*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Little Women*. The panel members went to the classroom and presented their discussions. The class was told they were to act as critics and thus help youngsters in their preparation of the program for the radio. The teachers reported excellent class interest and response. The experience before an audience and the critical help given by the class and the teacher were helpful in preparing the panel for recording.

What have we learned from these experiments with books, people and radio? We have started out with an academic approach, teaching youngsters how to evaluate a book in terms of its construction and style. That approach has value, and we don't intend to discard it. We learned however, that we tapped the most vital source of interest and talk whenever the problems and situations in the book were related to youngsters' problems of today. (All this would have been obvious, I suppose, from the beginning, to one who had embraced Dewey without reservation.) Schools, discipline, and entertainment in *Tom Sawyer's* day were compared and contrasted to the present. The youngsters speculated on how the most important characters, with the behavior traits endowed them by the author, would face problems of a modern world.

We learned that of the four: character, plot, setting, and style, discussion of the character was the most rewarding, probably because vital characters in great fiction have the same qualities of personality that in real life make for endless opinion, speculation, and conjecture.

Plot and style were the most difficult to do. We contented ourselves with teaching the youngsters that the style is an author's way of looking at life,

with laughter or with tears, with grimness or with gladness, and his way of expressing what he sees. That way may be filled with numerous figures of speech, or it may be simple and direct; it may be poetic, or it may be reportorial.

The youngsters groped in some confusion in trying to arrive at a decision about style. Some of them did, however, come out with a few facts that make inclusion of the point worthwhile for discussion.

Doing plot well is the hardest of all. We all have friends who nab us and say, "Let me tell you about the wonderful movie I saw last night." You try to edge away, but it's no use. You listen with patience. "Well, John was killed at a tea party where there was coffee in the tea caddy, and when his sister spaded the garden, she discovered that John hadn't planted hydrangeas at all. His sister always drank coffee, you see. Larry flew planes for the Chinese." Many attempts at telling snatches of plot are as unintelligible as that. Just as, with a glimmer of interest, you begin to detect logic and sequence, a completely new character and irrelevant event are slapped in. The technique of telling a story, or harder yet, part of a story, so that an audience follows with enjoyment is worth more time than we have spent on it in our discussions to the present time, for incidents told with narrative skill are sure to capture interest.

And that brings us to listener response. I know that when we played our recordings to the class, the response was enthusiastic. There is no doubt, I feel, about the success of the programs in stimulating among the listeners enthusiasm for similar projects. It is harder to judge how much the discussion led to a desire to read the books discussed. The radio programs heard in the library did result in a demand, immediately after the program, for the book the panel talked about. We need more reports, however, before we get a real evaluation of listener response.

NEWS NOTES

BOOK MEETINGS— NORTHERN STYLE

This year members of the Association of Children's Libraries and of the School Library Association (Northern Section) are making a "world tour of exploration" through their joint meetings. The first stop was made on October 21st when the groups enjoyed a dinner meeting at the South China Restaurant, honoring Jade Snow Wong, ceramist and author of the popular *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. One hundred ten librarians, from school and public libraries, attended, coming from as far distant places as Lodi and Coalinga as well as from the nearby Bay cities.

The second stop was made on November 11, when seventy-five members and guests dined "en famille" at Des Alpes, an old-time French restaurant in the North Beach section of San Francisco. Guest of honor was Ralph Moody whose inimitable book, *Little Britches*, has captured the hearts of America.

On December 9th, we met for a book luncheon at the Western Women's Club in San Francisco. The program, which centered around the Christmas theme, opened with the retelling of the story of the Nativity. This was followed by talks on book selection for various age levels from the pre-school period through adolescence, by Miss Margaret Girdner, Miss Quail Hawkins, and others. Christmas solos by San Francisco high school students, and carol singing by the whole group completed a very worthwhile program.

At the time this is written, plans are not fully worked out for the January 13th dinner meeting, but the tentative plans are for a panel discussion of themes used in teen-age literature. It is hoped that Mr. Howard Pease will discuss his new book for boys, *The Dark Adventure*, and that a representative from the Juvenile Court will talk on the use that can be made of biblio-

therapy in developing children's attitudes.

The final dinner will be held on April 14th in Alameda. Mrs. Elizabeth Hemrich, librarian of Alameda High School, will be in charge of the program which will have for its theme, "Books for the Elementary Child."

Plans have not yet been announced for the spring meeting of the section, but be sure to save the date, May 12th, and remember that this meeting will be held in San Jose. We know that Mrs. Marjorie Martin and her committee are planning an interesting day for us.

BOOK BREAKFASTS— SOUTHERN STYLE

Under the competent direction of Wilma Cornwell, Chairman, the Book Breakfasts of the School Library Association, Southern Section, got off to a running start at Mannings Coffee Shop in Los Angeles Saturday morning, October 7th. That running start established a record pace at the second breakfast, November 4th, when Jade Snow Wong, author of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, gave her charming account of the writing of that book. Miss Wong prefaced her remarks by saying that she had found the librarians of the Northern Section such nice people that she couldn't refuse the librarians of the Southern Section who, she felt must be equally nice. Our thanks to the Northern Section for being so nice—perhaps we can "cast our bread upon the waters" for you some day!

To praise the second book breakfast as it deserves would create such a sadness among the librarians who weren't present that we desist.

With a December interlude we anticipate "reunion at Mannings" on January 6th with a new program of book reviews—and with who knows what manner of "white rabbit" surprises "drawn from the hat" by the magic of our chairman.

EVERY YEAR COME CHRISTMAS!

The annual Christmas Institute meeting of the S.L.A.C., Southern Section, was held December 9; the morning session at the Hawthorne School in Beverly Hills and the luncheon meeting in the Crystal Room of the Beverly Hills Hotel. The occasion left nothing to be desired in Christmas festivity, good fellowship, good food and, above all, stimulating and enlightening speakers.

Miss Elizabeth Sands, former Associate Superintendent of Los Angeles City Schools gave her "Report from Japan" at the morning meeting. Such a report from Miss Sands comes from her own first-hand knowledge of the subject, gained as the only woman selected by the government to take part in the Institute for Educational Leadership in Japan.

Mr. Richard Armour of Scripps College spoke at the luncheon meeting on "Poets at Play". Mr. Armour's knowledge of his subject is a first-hand acquisition also, for he speaks as a poet, as well as a student of poets and poetry.

Some two hundred librarians and their guests enjoyed the luncheon including guest authors, James Hilton, Louise Stinetorf, Eleanor Cameron, Eula Long, Terry Korn, Dick Grace, Vanya Oakes, Nancy Shea and John Espey.

OUR FAR FLUNG LIBRARIANS

Miss Marie Delmas, former librarian at Horace Mann Junior High School in San Francisco, is now in Nurnberg, Germany, where she is in charge of army libraries in that region. Last July, Miss Delmas returned to the United States after serving for two years as supervisor of seven army libraries in Japan.

Mrs. Catherine Stalford Chestnut, former president of the Northern Section, S.L.A.C., has taken a year's leave of absence from Marina Junior High School, San Francisco, and is making a trip around the world. Her itinerary

includes Albert National Park in Central Africa, Siam, and a trip down the Nile to Cairo.

Miss Delmars "took a bow" at the Chinese dinner and Mrs. Chestnut at the French dinner meeting of the Northern Section, S.L.A.C. They were guests of honor at a tea given by Mrs. Magdalena Schilthuis (Mission High School, San Francisco), assisted by Miss Margaret Jones, Aptos Junior High School, San Francisco.

LIBRARIANS—COMING AND GOING

Mr. Milton Black, formerly head of the English Department and also librarian of Redding High School, is now librarian of the new Shasta Junior College in Redding.

Miss Marian Matteson, librarian of Yuba College, Marysville, writes that she is most fortunate to have as her new assistant Mrs. Anne Cook. Mrs. Cook is a graduate of Wellesley College, who brings an excellent background of teaching experience to her new position.

From Fresno comes the news that Mrs. Melissa Fuller who was librarian at Theodore Roosevelt High School has gone to Easton where she is organizing a library in the Washington Union High School. Best wishes of her many friends in the School Library Association will go with Mrs. Fuller in her new position.

Mrs. Effie Johnson, formerly librarian of Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School, Fresno, is now librarian of Roosevelt High School. The junior high division of this school has been closed.

We are sorry to hear that Miss Dorothy Elliot, librarian of Fresno High School has retired because of ill health. No regular librarian has been appointed as yet to replace her.

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DESIGN FOR BOOK WEEK

CAROL RIGGS

B-12, Manual Arts High School, Los Angeles

Guest of honor recently at a Manual Arts library tea in celebration of National Book Week was Miss Vanya Oakes, well known authoress.

Miss Oakes traveled in China and the Orient for ten years before World War II, and tells of her adventures in such books as *By Sun and Star*, *White Man's Folly*, *Bamboo Gate*, and *Footprints of the Dragon*.

A highlight of her talk was of the conflict in a Chinese family between the new and old ways of life which forced one son to run away and join the Communists. Miss Oakes was very much impressed with the way the Chinese student pursued his studies even to the extent of using an arrangement of mirrors to reflect the light of one small lamp so he could see to read.

Miss Nance O'Neill, the librarian,

MISS FLORENCE BAKER RETIRES

Florence Baker, librarian at Oakland Technical High School for thirty years resigned on November 1, 1950. She followed Mrs. Evelyn Steel Little in that position. She has been active in library organizations and served as president of the School Library Association of California, Northern Section, and has contributed articles to professional journals.

Her many friends in S.L.A.C. and especially the school librarians of Oakland will miss her, while thinking of the many interests she will follow at her home in Salinas.

Mrs. Maurine Hardin is now librarian at Technical. Miss Doris Chesterfield is replacing Mrs. Hardin at Frick Junior High School.

and other members of the library staff were hostesses. One person from each Social Studies class was a guest.

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(If you have any suggestions after reading the following letter to the editor please write to Miss Katherine Kaye, Librarian, Placer Union High School, Auburn, California.)

Would there be some corner of a future SLAC Bulletin in which you could print a question for me? It concerns a problem of library administration on which we would like to hear the opinion of other librarians who use, or have tried, the same set-up.

Our high school library has suffered such losses in recent years—surreptitious removals, that is, not honestly reported accidental losses—that the administration has asked me to consider the advisability of changing to rather strictly supervised stacks instead of our present open shelves all around the room in which it is necessary to have regularly assigned study halls, often quite large groups.

The change we are considering would concentrate the books in stacks at one end, or in one half, of the room, par-

tioned from the rest of the room by counter-height shelving, with a relatively narrow entrance at the charging desk. There would still be free access to all the books, but the students could be closely supervised as they left the book area for the study-table area. Examining the books of all students at the library door under our present arrangement does not seem possible with such large assigned groups.

This suggested stack arrangement would present quite a few problems, of course, such as its effect on circulation and the use of the library, location of reference books, magazines, and the librarian's work space, supervision of the stacks, and success of the plan on the whole. I would therefore like to correspond with someone else who has used the plan, before we decide to reorganize.

Would it be possible and advisable to publicize the problem, briefly or fully as you see fit, asking for opinions and suggestions?

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SPEAKING OF BOOKS

J. Donald Adams

Reprinted from N. Y. Times Book Review
January 1, 1950

It is a reasonable assumption that during recent weeks salesmen in bookstores were being subjected to the usual seasonal requests for something that might interest an uncle who likes to read history, an aunt who has the strangest interest in pirates, or a brother who reads everything that touches upon the home life of the bumblebee. They are not unreasonable requests and I have no bone to pick with the makers of them, but I am out of patience with the people who wander into a bookshop and ask for something suitable for a "teen-ager" to read.

If I were asked for a list of symptoms pointing to what is wrong with American education and American culture, or to the causes for the prolongation of American adolescence, I should place high on the list the multiplication of books designed for readers in their teens. I am not certain whether demand or supply came first; that is not a matter easily determined, if it can be at all. There is no doubt whatever, though, that the supply is now enormous and the demand considerable. So far as I know, ours is the only country in which the writing of books (other than textbooks) for adolescents reaches sizable proportions.

The existence of this phenomenon had not occurred to me until the other day, when, at a meeting of the Books Across the Sea Committee, I heard Mrs. May Lamberton Becker report on the activities of the organization in England. Among other things, she noted the almost complete non-existence in English publishing of the so-called teen-age book.

This, incidentally, may be as good a time as any to refer to the work of Books Across the Sea. Carried on under the auspices of the English-Speaking Union, it undertakes an interchange of books between the two countries, the selections on either side being made with

a view to the promotion of better mutual understanding. It may, by the way, surprise readers of this column, as it did me, to learn that less than 3 per cent of new British books are made available in American editions. The proportion of American books published in England is today very much greater; I do not know the figures, but the gap is a very wide one.

Be that as it may, my concern at the moment is with this matter of books written for boys and girls at the adolescent stage. It is one of the most formative periods in any life (the other being the years before the age of 6), and the ideas and attitudes with which we are brought in contact at that time are likely to have an important and often decisive effect upon the ideas and attitudes by which we are governed throughout the remaining years. For my own part, I know that the writers I read in my late teens left more of a mark on me than those I have read since. Later reading may have changed my opinions about many things; what I have in mind is something deeper, more unconscious than mere opinion: those underlying attitudes which set the pattern for our whole approach to life.

The teen-age book, it seems to me, is a phenomenon which belongs properly only to a society of morons. I have nothing but respect for the writers of good books for children; they perform one of the most admirable functions of which a writer is capable. One proof of their value is the fact that the greatest books which children can enjoy are read with equal delight by their elders. But what person of mature years and reasonably mature understanding (for there is often a wide disparity) can read without impatience a book written for adolescents?

It seems to me most desirable that there be no intermediary stage between the book for children and the book for

adults. There have been, it is true, a few writers whose work would seem to have been appropriately addressed to readers in the adolescent years. One was G. A. Henty, whose stories were eagerly devoured by the boys of my own generation. But a boy who could enjoy Henty could also enjoy Dumas, who did not write for an age group. He could certainly enjoy the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, if they were not thrust upon him as tasks to be performed and to be catechized over. There are many books, written without age groups in mind, simple enough to be appreciated by youngsters, and yet with a power of suggestion, because they were not written down to an arbitrary level, which make the artificial and limited horizon of the teen-age the wasteful superfluity that it is.

For readers of any age, it is a good thing to make the acquaintance of books that they do not completely or immediately understand. Life does not come to us like that; neither should books. If development is not to be impeded, there must be some teasing of the mind, some reaching out for meanings and significances that are not at once apparent. I think that writers—and I have in mind particularly those addressing themselves to an adolescent audience—who are careful not to overreach what they conceive to be the mental group of those for whom they write, are doing their readers a disservice.

SHADES OF T-V

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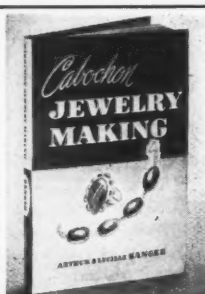
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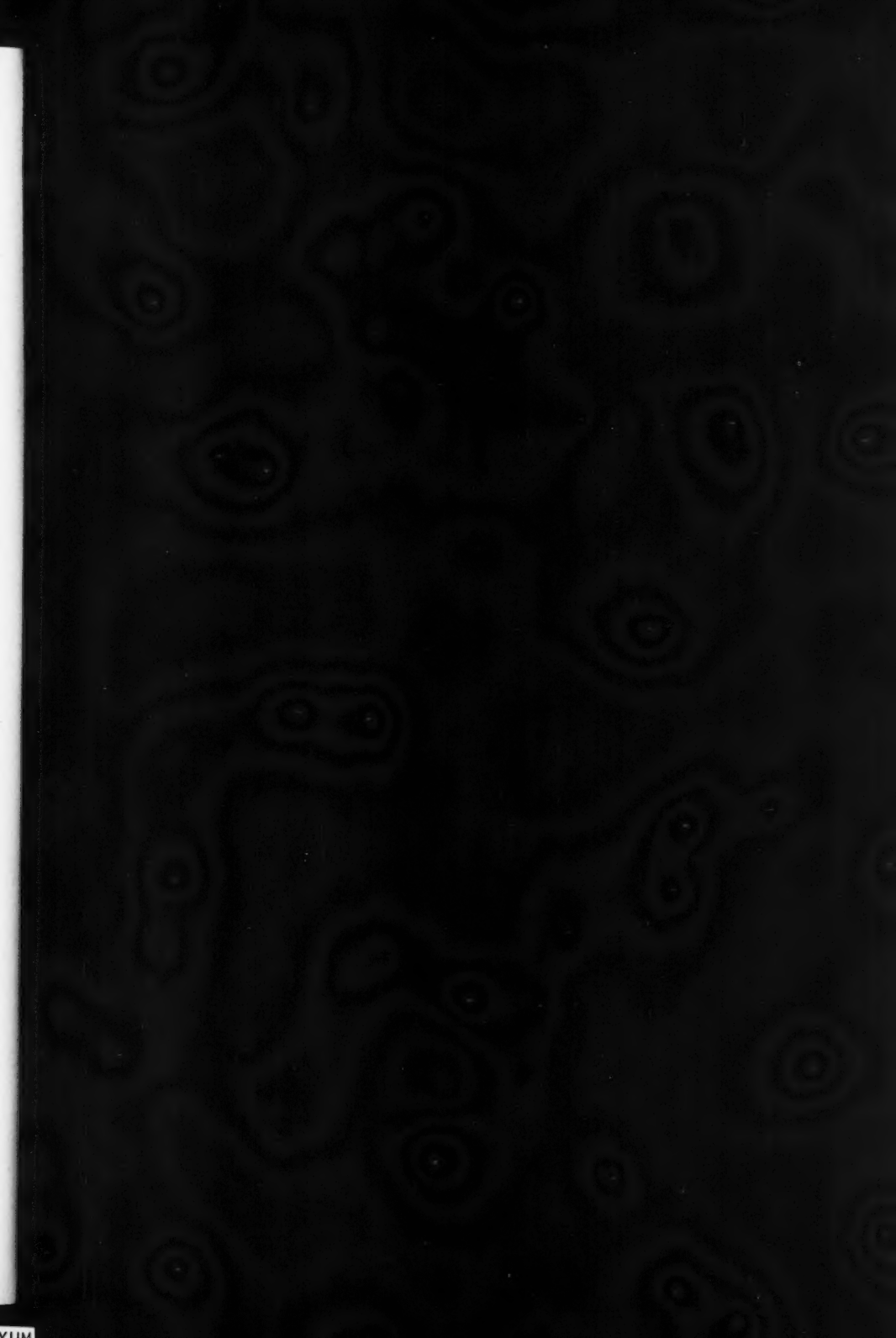
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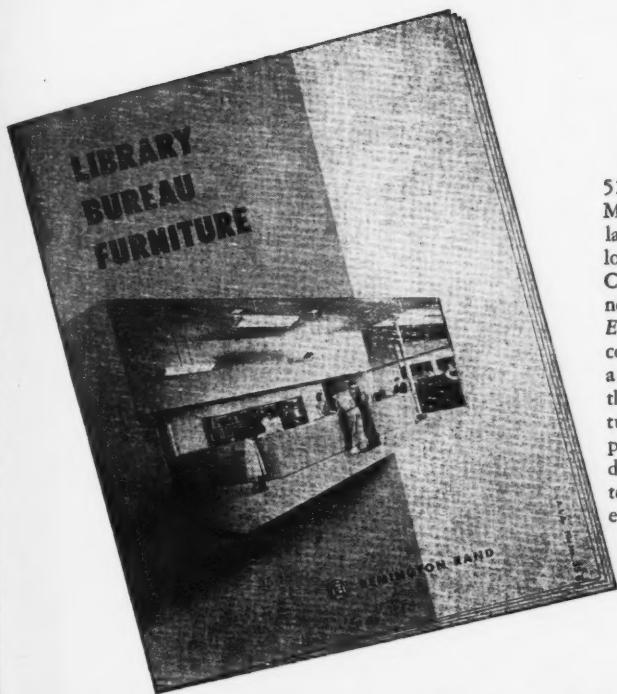
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